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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Cambodian Supreme National Council is expected to accede to two basic international human rights covenants on 20 April when Secretary-General visits that country.

+ Administrative Committee on Coordination in Geneva, presided over by Secretary-General, discusses transition period of Central and Eastern Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States and consequences for United Nations system.

+ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees says "response has not been encouraging" to appeal for $27.5 million to aid 150,000 refugees fleeing into Bangladesh from Myanmar.

+ Experts urge Human Rights Committee to consider Yugoslavia's report only on interim basis in view of recent events.

+ Commission on Transnational Corporations resumes eighteenth session at Headquarters to examine role of transnationals in changing world economy.

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The Secretary-General's Special Representative for Cambodia, Yasushi Akashi, announced today in Phnom Penh that members of the Supreme National Council -- the sole legitimate authority in that country -- have agreed to sign the instruments of accession to the two basic international human rights covenants on 20 April.

The two Covenants -- the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights -- will be signed during a meeting between the Supreme National Council and the Secretary-General when he visits Cambodia.

In a statement issued at Headquarters today, Mr. Akashi said the signature would be an "important concrete demonstration" of Cambodia's commitment to respect and safeguard the basic rights of all its citizens and would provide a framework in Cambodian law within which Cambodians would

undertake activities for the protection and promotion of their rights and freedoms.

According to the statement, the human rights component of the United Nations Transition Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) had established a basic mechanism and procedure for immediately investigating alleged serious violations of human rights of Cambodians. Following an investigation, it said, the UNTAC Director of Human Rights would recommend to the Special Representative any corrective or other action which he believed should be taken as a result of the outcome of the investigation.

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In separate news today, Security Council President Simbarashe Simbanenduku Mumbengegwi (Zimbabwe) told correspondents this afternoon that the Council would probably vote on a draft resolution on Cyprus tomorrow following consultations on that subject.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali was presiding over the work of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) today in Geneva.

According to a press communiqué issued in Geneva, today's agenda included discussion of the consequences for the United Nations system of the transition period in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States as well as the preparations for the Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), scheduled to take place in Rio de Janeiro in June.

Before today's session, the Secretary-General met with UNCED Secretary-General Maurice Strong and with Mr. Boutros-Ghali's Envoy to Libya, Under-Secretary-General Vladimir Petrovsky, who gave him a preliminary report on his recent mission to Tripoli.

This evening, the Secretary-General was scheduled to meet with Youssef Debri, Special Adviser to Colonel Muammar Qaddafi, and again with Mr. Petrovsky.

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According to a report from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) today, more than 191,000 refugees have arrived in Bangladesh as of 1 April.

The UNHCR has appealed to donors for $27.5 million to aid 150,000 refugees. Although it has received contributions from four States and the European Community, the Agency said that so far the response had not been encouraging. The Agency said it was unlikely that the crisis would be rapidly resolved and pointed out that the Government of Myanmar has denied accusations of persecution and has maintained that the refugees are illegal immigrants.

(more)

The Secretary-General met yesterday in Geneva with Jan Eliasson, Coordinator for Emergency Assistance and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, who has just returned from a mission to Bangladesh and Myanmar.

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With one day left of its forty-fourth session held in New York, several experts have urged the Human Rights Committee to consider Yugoslavia's third periodic report only on an interim basis, saying human rights in that country have been overshadowed by recent events.

Discussion yesterday centred on the right to self-determination of the peoples of Yugoslavia and on reported human rights violations being carried out by the Federal army in the name of restoring constitutional authority. Several experts said the Federal Government should be subject to higher standards of observance of the Covenant than the break-away republics, and called for the exercise of greater control over the troops.

In introducing his country's report, the adviser to the Federal Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Yugoslavia, Miodrag Mitic, said the circumstances under which the report was being delivered were extraordinary. It was a time when the basic human rights of the citizens of Yugoslavia were being seriously threatened.

In spite of the Yugoslavian history of one-party rule, the development of human rights had been impressive under recent constitutional reform, he said, adding that the constitutional system in the past two years had undergone fundamental change and had come closer to international standards. An end to the one-party monopoly and the promotion of freedom of expression and political activity was part of that reform.

The 18-member Committee of experts is charged with examining States parties' reports describing their compliance with the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

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Transnational corporations, more than ever before, were key players on the world economic scene as they were a major source of capital and technology -- important determinants of economic growth. Samuel B. Assante of the Department of Economic and Social Development expressed that view yesterday, as the eighteenth session of the United Nations Commission on Transnationals resumed at United Nations Headquarters.

According to reports before the Commission, transnationals are central to the development process, especially with regard to technology transfer, which is facilitated through increased foreign investment and the supply of capital goods to developing countries. On that issue, speakers yesterday stressed the importance of transparency in the activities of the transnationals and in national foreign investment policies.

(more)

The representative of Colombia, Maria Francisca Arias, said developing countries had created favourable conditions for foreign investment and argued transnational must facilitate the transfer of new technology to those countries with due regard for environmental concerns. Germany's representative, Dietrich Kurth, stressed that the dissemination of technology was not a simple process. In his view, technology, in the form of hardware and managerial skills, was best disseminated at the international level on the basis of market-oriented economies by means of intensive foreign trade, growing company cooperation and direct investment.

The Commission will continue its discussions until April 15, during which time it will also examine transnational as agents and beneficiaries of a number of changes, including the increasing globalization of trade and privatization of industry, and the regional concentration of the world economy around the United States, Western Europe and Japan. It will also take up the role of sanctions against South Africa.

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